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Interview with Marcia and Kelly Brown

Kathy Riecks

Marcia Brown

Kelly Brown

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Kathy Riecks
Interview Transcript-Marcia and Kelly Brown
16 March 1995

On Thursday, March 16 at 9:00 p.m. I interviewed Marcia and Kelly Brown in the dining room of their home on Waterford Road in northwestern Knox County. I used a PZM microphone. A television was on in the background.

KR: Kathy Riecks, MB: Marcia Brown, KEB: Kelly Brown

Counter: 000

KR: We can go through them, if we get to talking that's fine, I'm probably a little disorganized, because I just came back from break and trying to get back in the framework of this, but we'll just see what happens.

MB: OK

KR: OK, This is Kathy Riecks on March 16th 1995 and I'm talking to Kelly and Marcia Brown in their house in Waterford.

OK, Probably a basic question, and whoever wants to answer it, both of you whatever, but do you consider this a family farm?

MB: Yes, definitely, why are you hesitating? (to Kelly)

KEB: Oh yes, definitely, it's definitely a family farm, where legally a partnership, but we certainly operate all for one and one for all.

KR: Is that important to you?

KEB: Oh, yeah. I don't think with the kind of business organization we have, but just kind of family organization we have, it would be very difficult to have more employees and be people managers instead of farm managers.

KR: Umm, did you always want to be a farmer?

KEB: No,
--laughter--

MB: It's a good story, go ahead share it.

KEB: Now when I got out, when I got out of high school, I I really, I really wanted thought medicine was the direction I wanted to take, and after two years of college, I don't know it just,

it wasn't there and I guess when I look back at the kind of things that that I'd grown up with, kind of values, that were here, I just plain decided I could probably give this a try and I'd be happy with it. So I completed that, I completed a degree in agriculture and then farmed away from here for a couple of years which is really made me appreciate the family farm kind of atmosphere

MB: Yes, because you were a hired hand

KEB: I learned what being, what being, even though I was the manager of the other farm, I still learned what it was like to do it for someone else, instead of myself, so I think that that probably, that reinforced that whole idea of family farming being just as important as farm business.

KR: That's interesting, (to Marcia) now you're not from a farm background now are you?

MB: No, not at all. My parents, a generation removed maybe, from it. Both my parents were raised in rural settings, but my father was a career Air Force officer, and so I lived, I think I attended eleven schools, nine schools or something like that

Kr: Yes..

MB: Here and there and everywhere, but I, throughout college I decided that I really wanted to live in a, I had three criteria. I wanted to live in a small town where the grocer knew my children, where I could sit on my front porch and know the people going by, and now I can't think what the third criteria was, but at any rate, my senior year in college I had an interview in this town for a teaching position and my college roommate and I drove down Sandusky Street and it's beautiful. And I said this is where I want to live, and then thank goodness they offered me a job.

KR: That was convenient of them!

MB: Yes, This really, Fredericktown really resembles my mother's hometown in upstate New York, and except missing the lake, at the bottom of the hill, one of the finger lakes, and so I fell in love with the town first, much to my aunt's, one of my aunt's headaches I guess, she
: 050 said "I've got three rules for you. Don't become a teacher." and I did, and she says, "whatever you do teach in a big town don't go to a small town" and I did that, and she says "Well, as long as you've done that, just don't marry a farmer"

KR: Oh well...

MB: She was rather unhappy with her life, but I've been really happy with mine

KEB: Oh well...

MB: Yeah, oh well, Aunt Eunie, wherever, in heaven Aunt Eunie, but umm, once I started teaching then I met his mother and that's a whole other story, and then we got together about

three years later.

KR: How was the transition for you? from moving around a lot to Fredericktown

MB: My parents, were just scared to death for me. They were very pleased with the family, and my father I think one of the first times they drove down, drove up here, went to the farm, they were so impressed with the tidiness of the farm. My father said "You know, they keep their machinery undercover, that's a sign of a good man" or something like that. I went, Oh OK I thought there were other things to look for, but umm. I can remember our first year or maybe two years often my mother would ask Kelly, " What, How's she doing as a farm wife? Does she need help?" Do you remember that? (to Kelly) Oh I do!

KEB: No, that must have been private conversation,

MB: She would ask you.

KEB: Ask me?

MB: Oh I can remember... she was really concerned with how I would deal, because I'm was basically a lazy person. And she knew you couldn't do that on a farm. It was a transition, for one thing, the extended family, was rather hard, I think. I grew up in suburbia and all my immediate family was intact, but all my extended family was in New York, and we were all
: 075 over the country, so holidays were for immediate family only, and a lot of other things, and it was difficult that we could make a decision to go somewhere one night, or to do something, but it might get canceled out by what the extended family needed from us. And that was hard. But I think I've adjusted. What do you think?....now that's our entertainment! With four children we don't go out much, oh so let's have a family get-to-gether. Oh I think when I became engaged to Kelly, his mother gave me some advice, and she said "If, you may be marrying Kelly , but you're getting a whole family", and it's very true. And I passed that advice on to Kathie when she became engaged to Dan. I made a card for her that said "Welcome to the herd, you know you may be marrying Dan, but you're part of all of us," and it's hard at times. But I think that through farm meetings, that helps some, that airs some of our grievances, although they haven't been very regular, this winter, but we're apt to have farm meetings at least, every six weeks probably, wouldn't you say about that?

KEB: Oh, yeah. Formally, or informally, one or the other.

MB: Oh yes, yes with the daughter-in-laws, mother, and you know everyone and even our children now. Because our children are choring

KR: That's what I was going to ask.

MB: Yeah, they're, we have a twelve year old, a ten year old, four year old, and a three year old.

They older three are boys and the youngest is a girl and Dan and Kathie have a nine or ten year old, and a six or seven year old, seven year old I guess. And both of their boys and
: 100 our two older ones chore, regularly, they have assignments, I think that's it's harder for our kids maybe Dan and Kathie's than Kelly's family, because neither of us live directly on the farm. We live a half mile from the farm, and Dan and Kathie are a fourth of a mile, so I don't know. It's become habit with the boys and they aren't as vocal against "I got to chore!" as they used to be. But at least they aren't around me, they go more willingly. It's part of their routine now. But I can't keep an eye on them, oh that's not what I want to say, I often feel disjointed from the farm, because of the distance between. I can't look out and see that Ross isn't killing himself on the four wheeler or whatever.

KR: What sort of chores do they do?

KEB: Mostly feed calves, bed calves, move hay, they help move hay around the farm,

MB: Bring the cows in from the pasture in the summer, or can

KEB: yeah, some of that, they really do help tidy things up. If something needs moved from point A to point B, why they're pretty good slaves for getting that kind of stuff done.

MB: They're still to young to drive tractors in our opinion, and so they don't do that, yet.

KEB: And they, they do real well at jobs where they're allowed to use the four wheeler, E.T.C. to get around. They really like those kind of jobs.

MB: Kind of motivates them

KEB: yeah

: 125

KR: I can see why, yeah

KEB: Especially if it entails going through at least four or five mud puddles, between point A and point B, then you really going to get them to do the job.

KR: Well it just makes it more fun! I mean

MB: That's right

KR: Exactly. Are they involved in 4-H or FFA?

KEB: 4-H, they're not old enough to be involved in FFA.

KR: Oh that's right, that's just limited to high school.

KEB: The older boys are involved in 4-H, and have livestock projects, and then also rocketry, and this year.

MB: Yeah they're both doing rockets, and then the tree thing.

KEB: This year we've talked them into a, into a tree planting, Christmas tree planting project. Don't know where it will go yet, but

MB: We don't have the book yet, so we don't know the specifications, the specifics about it yet.

KEB: We're encouraging that one, as another way for them, to, I don't know, put some roots into the way that things get done around here.

MB: Hmm umm. That too.

KEB: Because Christmas tree project isn't exactly one that is started in February and ends in July, you know it's, it'd be six or seven years before harvesting will be done, so...

MB: And they help with the sugar camp too, they don't help with the boiling, but that's another job, the place that they enjoy being and then they help out in the woods.

KR: I'm trying to think who I met. I wasn't formally introduced to any of them, the one day I was out there, was

MB: I've got a dark headed son, and a shorter, stocky son, husky built. Those our two school age and then Dan's oldest wears glasses.

KR: Yeah I've met Dan's oldest I know and then there was another one there.

: 150

MB: Dane, and then Lucas is younger

KR: I've met both of them, I was thinking that there was someone else.

KEB: Probably Ross

MB: Yeah, it probably was Ross.

KEB: Ross is..

MB: He looks like Spanky of Little Rascals

KR: It was pretty cold that day, so we were all sort of bundled up.

MB: He's up in bed already, but yeah that's probably Ross

KEB: Especially if it was a Saturday because Carl, seems to have

MB: oh yeah this winter, he has a lot of

KEB: Power of the Pen and all kinds of school activities and seems like Saturdays are as busy as during the week.

MB: Yeah, he's in a lot of academic contests or competition, he's a seventh grader and they're getting into more things.

KR: Oh yeah.

MB: Along with changing of the attitude

KR: That one's always fun, do you think they are going to stick with it, farming? You hope for them to correct?

KEB: I guess I don't, I sure won't discourage them from trying it, but if they don't, if they don't lean that direction I'm not going to push. This is, This is just too hard of a work, with a different kind of, of a rewards than most jobs, that if you don't love it, there's no sense of putting up with it, or trying to do it, because it's just, it's just, it's too much work for somebody that doesn't love it, somebody who doesn't like to do it.

: 175

MB: That's true, Yes. I often wonder, why does he put himself through three hours of sleep at night, not regularly does he have that, but that's because he loves it.

KEB: It's a 365 days a year, and it's twelve, fifteen hours a day just regularly, and when you consider, what's a normal job, forty hours a week, you really, you really wonder and then, but then you hear the stories of what other people have to put up with in those forty hours, and how happy they are during those forty hours and I guess it all balances out, and everybody has to do their own thing, no I, I'll do everything I can to help our sons and daughter find a niche in the farm business if that's where they want to be, but I sure won't insist, "Since you're the next generation you must do this" because that, that won't get it.

KR: Umm, now you take care of the cattle, right

KEB: Yes

KR: That would definitely be three hours of sleep

: 200

MB: It can be. Yes he has a degree in Dairy Science, Dan has agronomy

KR: Yes, that's what I was thinking. Do you think that degree and schooling are important to farming? Do you think it's helped?

KEB: It helps, It sure helped me. Probably not as much in terms of day to day management, but in terms of knowing how to think, knowing how to make decisions, going through logical processes to get to end results, those kind of things. Critical thinking is not something that just happens in academia, it happens every place in the world and farming is no exception to that.

MB: And it helps you in long range planning

KEB: Sure, and also it I really do believe that if I were to the point that I wanted to change careers or was injured somehow that I could not do what I do now or as I get older I really think that there could be a time when I don't want to do this anymore and a degree will not be a stumbling block to going into a profession of another kind. I think it will be an asset to being able to demonstrate critical thinking skills, things that come along with having gone through four years of college, so no I'm glad I did that.

: 225

MB: Well, and don't you think that going from, you went from a narrow scope of living in Fredericktown all your life to a wide range of views,

KEB: That's for sure

MB: in college, and you've chosen to come back to this, not narrow view point, but because you went away you and you wanted to come back, it was of your own free will

KEB: That's true. I should, I never felt like I had to come back to do this, I never felt that pressure, that I had to, that it was my responsibility to somehow continue the farming tradition and hopefully we'll never pressure our kids that way either

KR: That's one of those things that I keep dealing with now. I'm a senior and what am I doing next year? Where do I want to go?

MB: Oh yes..

KR: But umm, So you're a teacher, what do you teach?

MB: Umm, hmm. Second grade. I've taught fourth and I don't want to go any older than that, and I don't think that I want to go any younger than second. So I'm really limiting my choices here, but, and I teach in Fredericktown

KR: The next question I really have is, do you all think there is a gap or a separation between a

farming community and a non-farming community?

MB: Definitely, definitely, Having lived in both. Very much so, and having relatives that are non-farmers, they live such a different lifestyle than we do. They don't understand some
: 250 of the importance involved in things that we do, just as we can't figure out, or I should say my husband and his family, having lived both places I can rationalize some actions, but there are some things that happen in suburbia or even in urban areas that go "uhh why would you do that?" Very simple example is, Chem-Lawn

KEB: That's it! That's a basic example. Why would anybody put fertilizer on their grass so that they get to mow it more often, or even irrigation. Why water your lawn so that it gets green and it grows faster so you can mow it more often, that kind of stuff, just never has

MB: That's one of many examples

KEB: That's a good one, that's a very good one, Now I guess that I think that the biggest gap between farm communities and urban communities is just a knowledge of each other. We basically, as a farm, as farm people and especially in, in the proximity to the cities that we live near to here, we're urban people, with that do, that have rural jobs. We have, you know,
: 275 we have telephones and TVs and the communication chains are easily, easily accessible to us and I think we are bombarded every time we turn on the radio, the TV or whatever with urban things, we're pretty, pretty familiar with how things happen on on that side, but when we have school children even come from Fredericktown from our Knox County school kids that come to the farm and are just absolutely flabbergasted by the smell of manure, or or the what a calf, what a calf's nose feels like, or

MB: "You have to milk on the weekends too?" "You have to milk Saturday and Sunday also?"

KEB: Not realizing that where food really comes from. It really is mind boggling that somehow farmers haven't figured out a way to tell their story, the way that Madison Avenue has been able to tell their story to us. If Michael Jordan could somehow sell food for us, it wouldn't matter what the food was, it, a lot of it would sell. If we could have him selling milk, WOW!, we couldn't make enough of it!

Counter : 300

MB: Well, you like those new ads for milk.

KEB: Oh, they're wonderful, but they don't have the, you know the spokesperson that Nike does

MB: for children, oh you're right, you're right

KEB: I don't know. I guess that I think that farmers are just by the way that they live and the, the resources that we are entrusted with, we're not given much credit for stewardship, and yet we,

every day, we have to deal with making sure that it's going to be there tomorrow. Because that's what our livelihood is and you know that I think that every time someone sees something about impure water supply, or soil contamination, or air pollution, or the bad things that happen, farmers are right in the middle of the bad guys, when I think realistically and I know personally farmers have to be stewards of their resources that we are entrusted with, or we would not be in business next year or the next week and so I think that those are the kinds of misunderstandings, miscommunications, that somehow farmers need to do a better job at and consumers need to lend a little more ear to. That answers that question I think.

: 328

KR: Yeah, yeah, I mean that sounds like something we keep hearing, you know that people just don't understand, and no one understands what farming is like

MB: Even in the small town. Four or five years ago, or maybe even farther, longer ago than that. There was a trout farm in town, right at the edge of town that had a big kill of their fish and they were trying to blame it on the farmers having used too much pesticides, cause it was in the springtime, and Mother Helper's that came in my room, were just adamant, "oh the farmers and the community, we need to have our water, .." so I said "You know, the farmers are not going to rape the land, if at all possible, because like Kelly says they need it next year, they 're going to do what they can to conserve it and use it as wisely as they can and the ladies went "phht," Deb, in particular (to Kelly)

KEB: No, Be careful! Don't, you're on tape you forget!

MB: oh I forgot

KEB: You're talking names,

MB: Well she has a different name now, she remarried, I'm sorry..

KEB: You just signed a waiver, you can't edit that, come on.

: 350

MB: at anyways..

KEB: Cut this story out of there

MB: At any rate, they hadn't thought of it in that way, you know they thought of you see the ads and you read how, uhh, farmers are using more and more chemicals and they just immediately jumped on the bandwagon, "Yes it's the farmer" never thinking, why would they kill their livelihood, in that way. As a local example

KR: Especially in the classroom, with the kids, are you surprised by how little they, I mean that's one thing that has really surprised me, hearing from people is how little children in this area know about farming, I mean I knew about this stuff, I didn't grow up on a farm, but good friends

of our family have a huge dairy operation, so I'd been up there and I'd seen cows being born, and I know all these things, so I'd just assumed

MB: Yeah, that keeps, oh well I was one of those very dumb people about farming. And yes, it does surprise me, and in the 18 years that I've taught here I would say that every year there are fewer farm connected children in Fredericktown schools. Farm Bureau and people try to teach the children and there are some very willing parents that try to expose their children to as much as they can. In all facets, but still, families get busy, and "we can go to a farm anytime" you know, and "we don't want to go there, we'll come back smelly"

KEB: It's not exactly been a curriculum emphasis on agriculture,

MB: no, no, no (agreeing with Kelly)

KEB: or that kind of thing, in the school systems, and I would probably think that in the rural school districts the probably the attitude is "well, why should we teach kids about stuff that's in their back, backyards. And yet, we probably need as much reinforcement about agriculture issues at this level, than in Columbus, or Cleveland, I mean. Our kids don't know a lot about agriculture.

MB: No

: 400

KEB: And agriculture also is becoming so specialized, that it's not like you can go to a farm and learn any more about everything, we have a dairy farm and it's hard to, I don't know much about sheep or pigs or horses, I don't know too much about horses, cause I know I don't want them around. (laughter) But it used to be a general farm, you could go to one farm and there were chickens and pigs and cattle and everybody knew everything about how to take care of them, and it doesn't work that way any more.

MB: And yet, the stereotype of the farmer is still, stands. I can remember in college, telling one of my roommates, who was from a real rural area also, and I used the term "the dumb farmers," and she jumped my case, Cheryl (to Kelly), and said "Farmers are not dumb, they can't be dumb and continue farming" I'm going "well look at Hee-Haw, you know look at all these TV things" and that was my connection.

KEB: Green Acres

: 425

MB: (laughter), We grew up, Green Acres. Even though I had a farmer uncle, and it's, and I knew he was a wise man, or is a wise man, I was still was persuaded with the stereotype that the media has the farmer portrayed. And uh, my first year of teaching up here, as student of mine kind of set me straight again, because I was misusing farm terms that I thought, I used the word straw instead of hay. I confused the two. Never, I honestly did not know there was a difference, well he set me straight, so I thought, well I'd better learn some about this business, so.

KR: Yeah, what are there some other misconceptions that you had before you moved out here?

MB: Yes, I thought farming was a very slow placed life. (laugh) I'm so pooped from this slow pace! It's far from slow paced, your job is never done. You just quit at a certain time, knowing that tomorrow morning you're going to have the same routine again or that you
: 450 didn't get that all planted yesterday, so we've got to finish it. And I also thought, that it's my father always worked nine to five, I don't know, or whatever, eight to whatever it was, but he had regular hours pretty much so, and I couldn't understand why since they were their own boss, why couldn't he not finish making hay tonight. "There's a movie I want to go see at the theater, Let's go to the movie tonight" and it was like "Well, no, we've got to make it all tonight, because it may rain tomorrow." And I'm thinking, "yeah, it may rain" And nine time out of ten, they're right! They've got to get it done. Because something happens the next day that would have stopped them. So, while they are self employed, it's not a, how do I want to say it?

KEB: You're not always in control of everything that happens.

MB: Yeah, yeah I guess that's it.

KEB: And that's for sure, we are so dependent, weather wise

MB: Yes
: 475

KEB: Yields, from year to year, budgets from year to year

MB: You do as much as you can today, because you don't know what tomorrow's going to bring I guess, weather wise, or cow emergency, maybe you need to have a surgery performed the next day, or a piece of equipment breaks down, a lot of spontaneous happenings, I guess.

KEB: That's for sure, Well, I've got a, When I went to the barn yesterday morning there were these strange hoof prints everywhere, just everywhere around the barn. And finally by mid-morning I'd found out that neighbors had twenty eight steers get out the night before. And they'd been to our farm, and been to another neighbor's farm and finally they got corralled in a barn, and got them hauled home.

MB: About a mile from the farm they belong in.

KEB: Yeah, so you just never know,

MB: Excuse me.

KEB: You're just thankful, it's not yours
--turn tape over--

Counter : 000

(Kelly had been teasing Marcia for telling me so much details about the fishing farm story on tape)

KR: I don't think you can really hear the names, so I think we're all right and I'll know what to avoid.

How active are you in Farm organizations, such as the Farm Bureau, or the Grange, or any other things?

KEB: Well, we used to be very, very active in the Farm Bureau, I served on our Knox County Farm Bureau Board for six years, and during that time, Marcia and I were chosen to on the Ohio, the Ohio Farm Bureau Young Couples committee, that we were active on for three years, and then when we were winding down our term, our three year term on that we were chosen to represent a seven state area on the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, and with that we traveled quite a bit for three years, different kinds of leadership seminars, we attended the American Farm Bureau Annual Meetings, and it really was a wonderful experience and a lot off good exposure to the political side of agriculture. And I think it probably sharpened the kind of communication skills that I have, that I'm not afraid to call my congressman and talk to him on the phone, or write him a letter, or if it has to be done it has to be done and you do it. Farm Bureau, is probably the one organization that we learned a little bit about how agriculture can reach farther than your normal fence line boundary, but we've also been active in a Young Farmer group here in

: 025 Fredericktown, we really helped to reactivate the thing when it got going, shortly after we were married,

MB: Fifteen years ago

KEB: yeah, yeah

MB: And there was a Young Farm Wives, that I was involved in.

KR: Are you still active in that?

KEB: No, no, we're too old.

KR: Naw..

KEB: We have four kids and lots of, lots of other commitments, and I think that's probably why.

MB: As the children have come, our out of house responsibilities, obligations, have lessened

KEB: At one time, I served for a couple of terms on our Knox County Dairy Service Unit Board, and just several, several various things, I was on the Ag extension advisory board for a term. Just a variety, a variety

MB: NOBA (?) Boards

KEB: NOBA Boards

MB: NOBA Boards

KEB: A variety of farm organizations, that over, that over the last twenty years have kind of, we've been very active and not so active, always keep up, but don't always have time to serve, just because of family commitments.

MB: And I have not, I've never been real active in farm committees. Farm Bureau for a while, though I was never a trustee, but I was membership chairman one year and worked on membership. And Young Farm Wives, I was active with, for several years. But having a full time job. I hold down two full time jobs, being a housewife and mother, and teaching. And it doesn't leave much time for my own pleasures, committee work. I'm on committees that don't have meetings. (laugh) If I can help it!

KR: What exactly is young Farm Wives?

: 050 MB: It was just a counter part to the Young Farmers. We would meet, it is

KEB: a lot of times the same night.

MB: Oh, yes most of the time we would so that husband and wives could go to the high school at the same time and the men had their own program, and then we women would have a program. Sometimes it was a home-ec oriented one

KEB: Crafts

MB: And we did crafts. It was a wonderful chance for me to meet with other farm wives, of all ages, and hear that I shared a lot of the same complaints. Not having been raised in a farm family, I don't know, it's, it's a I think farmers are a close community and I didn't feel like fit in easily, oh we were members of Grange for a number of years too, for several years, and it was just.. It was hard, it was hard to feel like I was a part of it, and through Young Farm Wives I formed friendships that I still hold even though we don't go to meetings anymore. And we get together and crab together, you know "Or all Right! Guess what happened?"

KEB: We're still active in the Farm Bureau Council.

MB: Oh, very much so.

KEB: Social type of group that gets together monthly, and that that's our link with Farm Bureau

now

MB: Yeah, it is

KEB: I'm sure that will continue, because we're we, I think we enjoy each other enough that

MB: Our council

KEB: Yeah we enjoy our council enough that

MB: We enjoy each other too. (laugh)

KEB: Yeah, but more than just Council night though

MB: Yeah, you're right, more than once a month, that's right

KEB: Yeah

KR: Do you think organizations like this are helpful and useful?

: 075 KEB: They are, at the local level, sometimes they just serve as support groups, where the farmers can get together and talk to other farmers about the same like problems and that kind of thing. And then as , especially organizations that have a state wide structure and the national, nation-wide, national structure, like Farm Bureau, Young Farmers has a good state structure. But Farm Bureau being a politically active and very politically respected organization. Those kinds of organizations really give farmers a voice and do things collectively that individual farmers can't do, and that's that's probably the strength of those kinds of groups. Uhh, when farmers, when a group of farmers like Farm Bureau, can say we have X (knocks on table) members of table, and collectively we have decided on this policy should be implemented then people listen. If I call them up and say "Hey I think I've got a good idea for you" it's not quite as effective.

KR: That's one of the things, that's really impressed me about Farm Bureau, because I actually went to the dinner the other night

KEB: Oh, OK

KR: last weekend, and we had a little mini-advisory councils where we got together and discussed deer population. It was really interesting, because we all got into our little groups and discussed what the whole room thought, and then what the state policies were and..

KEB: The interesting thing about, about Farm Bureau, especially organizations are structured

from so that they are integrated from the top down, and Farm Bureau is exactly opposite that, in that we have structure that is basic grass roots, bottom up. And the bottom can control the : 100 top, and so we, that really gets back to pretty basic government. The people have the say and really, it's really kind of refreshing, compared to other kinds of organizations where you just take what comes down the line. That's why I think we've always enjoyed Farm Bureau and still enjoy it, and respect it and probably will keep right at supporting it.

KR: The, umm We talked about relations, the relationships you have with other people in your council. Do you see the other people in your council outside of farm council meetings? Or..

KEB: Yeah, we do, we have some of the guys do some custom work for us for example. So we have that relationship,

MB: Our children are friends

KEB: Yeah our children

MB: So we interact that way. And one of the ladies, well two of them, are educators also, one of them in particular, she and I will get together and have a good time. It's hard not to have a good time with her. And our sons are the same age. That's one thing interesting. Out of five couples in our council, three of us have sons that are seventh graders. And while the sons are very individual, and aren't necessarily close friends the parents are. And so we see them at school functions and whatever. So yeah, One of the couples in our council are older, : 125 or is older, and they're grandparents. But I really like their wisdom. I like having them in our council, I think that sometimes it gets a little harried at the meetings, with all the children present too. We try to corral the children someplace, away from our discussions but when you've got babes, you know, they come running around, it's hard to excluded them. But I really think that, I think that Dennis, the gentlemen in this couple, I think he enjoys hearing

KEB: horror stories

MB: Yeah, and then he delights in sharing his, and he does have some wisdom, doesn't he? He always sees, he's quite apt to see the discussion from a different point of view, and that only adds.

KR: yeah, that would

KEB: Yeah, but he's, two things, he's been there, and he also has a off, he's a mail man, so he has a Civil Service, or Public Service

MB: Yeah, Civil Service

KEB: Type of job, where most of us, we're self employed, and he's not

MB: anymore

KEB: Yeah, but he, the postal service is very union, very structured, very matter of fact, yet we self employed farmers, we don't go much for some of that sometimes, so.

MB: We have had some people leave our Council, because, two families I guess. Because as their children got older they didn't think that they could commit the time to meeting with council, but we've remained friends with them. One couple goes to our church, and the other we don't have any connection with, but when we see each other in the store or whatever, it's always stop and talk and catch up on news, so that's nice. And our council has been together
: 150 for sixteen years now. Right? Yes, because it started the summer after we got married.

KR: That's a long time

KEB: Yeah, we used to meet and no kids, but that's..

MB: yeah, that was so peaceful.

KEB: And now with our kids growing up

MB: more and more children

KR: What do you see for the future of farming in Knox County?

KEB: I don't think we are going to be any different than most of the national trends, in terms of declining, declining farmer numbers, aging, aging farmers, and also larger more specialized farms. I think, I think also, huge increases in part time farmers are going to happen, I think there's a certain sentiment of people that want to get back to the land, so to speak, and yet those folks are not going to be able to commit the time and the capital to be full time farmers, because of the benefits they have with their off job, off farm employment. They're not going to be able to afford to give up their off farm employment benefits to go to full time farming, but yet they will contribute a great deal to the aggregate of the farm products that are
: 175 produced in the county. I don't see, I guess the encroachment of Columbus is going to change the way, the way that some of the land use occurs, and I think that probably has troubling subject as farmers are going to have to face, in terms of land values, and in terms of do I sell my farm to let this business come in,

MB: or houses

KEB: or a housing development

KR: Like Centerburg

KEB: I think, I think that farmers are going to be impacted heavily as our water use concerns. Because I have, I have 150 head of livestock, of dairy livestock down here, of all ages, and if some regulator in Columbus says that it's more important for folks in Southern Delaware County to drink our water, then it is for my cows to drink it then, that's going to be a direct impact, and when you see the kinds of water use regulations and problems that, much more populated areas than we have, we don't know what could come down the road.

: 200 Other, other things in the future, I think we're going to be going to much more technology driven agriculture. It think it's real exciting when you hear about a satellite that's being designed to tell you what chemicals can be applied to what areas and what fields and control sprayers as they go through the field via satellite to get the right pesticides in the rights spots. And that's coming, that's coming, that's not a pipe dream, it's in the works. The technology in Dairy is crazy. You know the Dutch are designing robot milkers, so that, they think someday, the cows can just free choice milk themselves, that they will, that they will be programmed so to speak into every four, five, six hours, whatever they chose. The cows will walk into this feeding stall and be milked. That's a little far fetched. (laughter) There are a few Dutch herds being milked that way, but they have to be there, the farmers have to be there to do it, they have to be there to move the cows in and out and some of that kind of stuff

MB: Oh how terrible! They still have to go to the barn.

: 225

KEB: Yeah, but there's still lots and lots of technology that when I think about the kinds of production that we were looking at, even when I started farming, twenty years ago versus now we're almost doubling the production per cow. In the twenty years that I've been at it, and it's been just in the technological advances in the feeding and breeding and just management techniques. And that's not going to stop, because as long as we have a cheap food policy in this country, we're going to have to be more efficient. Until farmers or until food supplies run short, we're just going to have to keep getting more and more efficient. So, it's not going to get any easier.

KR: Do you think maybe that there will be a drop in the number of dairy farmers?

KEB: Oh certainly, that trend is going, that trend is on a it's on a roller coaster right now, it's full speed ahead to reduce the number of dairy farmers and increase the number of cows per farm.

: 250 When I started dairy, milking cows, 100 cow herds were just scattered. There may have been two in Knox County, and now, that, that's the rule of thumb. 100 cows is what you have to have to have a productive unit. And that's the, going to be one of the, 100 cows is going to seem like no big deal.

KR: Interesting. I'm trying to see if there's anything else I wanted to cover. Is there anything else that you think I've left out? Anything else I should know about farming? future of farming?

KEB: No, I don't think, I think that if there's something, that, that this project can do in terms of reducing stereotypes, and changing the way maybe, not only how people look at farmers but maybe how farmers view themselves, then maybe that's the value of most of this

KR: That's what we're thinking...

KEB: And there's also kind of a you know some base line things that your finding here too. That twenty five years from now, someone can look at the kind of things that you are putting together, and say where have we gone? From this time. Maybe this study breaks down the Ma and Pa image of the pitchfork and standing there together and that kind of thing. But where's it go from here? Who knows? I think that with the, with the government regulation atmosphere we're starting to see now, I'm sure, I'm sure we're going to go a lot farther away from subsidized agriculture than what we have now. European countries in contrast, they always say, we don't mind subsidizing agriculture because we've been hungry. And you know our people, our people just don't, don't understand that. They think that if there's a surplus then that's wasteful, and it is, but I would think that if there's something we ought to cherish and make sure there's a future for it, it's food production because all of us have a great stake in that, three times a day usually, and as long as we're going to be a prosperous people, we've got to figure out a way to feed us all, and feed us all in a way that doesn't break the bank on a daily basis to do it. So, I don't know. I get real upset when we talk about, when you hear stories about food safety, and you know nutritional problems in our country, when we don't have any idea what food problems are, other countries spend seventy five percent of their disposable income on food, and we belly ache and complain when we spend twelve to fifteen and can have fresh broccoli in December. (laughter)

MB: Well I think that one thing that, for whatever reason, within Knox County I see farm wives, that are farm wives, they are out working with their husband or as I read in somewhere last night, there's an increase in the number of wives, where did I read that? that are farming full time.

KEB: There were some statistics saying that women, that the growth of full time women farm managers has grown dramatically

MB: more than men, what was that in?

KR: hmm

: 325

MB: At any rate, I don't consider myself a farm wife. I'm Kelly's wife, but I don't farm. I farmed before children, I helped out, I'd go down and help out in the milk house, and I'd raked hay so I could get a suntan. But I've never been involved in the daily operation. I wouldn't know where to begin anymore. Because as I already stated I'm busy with other things. The one job that we share is our family. He has his occupation and I have mine and we join here. And we certainly share about our work, but we're not working hand in hand like some farm families do. And

KEB: And I think that you also have to mention, the blend of farm income and non-farm income help make our lives a lot easier

MB: well, yes

KEB: Than if we really had to depend on the farm for everything, with its fluctuations from year to year, it'd be a lot tougher.

(son walks through the room)

MB: Would you like to say Hello and Good Night?

Carl Brown: Hello and Goodnight.

MB: This is Carl

KR: Hi!

KEB: Mr. Social, Mr. Twelve year old

: 350

MB: You're walking better. He's having trouble getting into track, he ran cross country.

KEB: Not track, he's having trouble getting into shape

MB: Getting into shape, he ran cross country in the fall and was successful at that, but he's had a couple strikes against him, since then, so he's pooped.

So at any rate, yes. I don't know how some farm families do it with the wife staying home and working on the farm, and we have two families that are friends of ours, that do that. The wife milks and drives the tractor and whatever, but the health care costs, just having them. I used to say I worked for my benefits, I don't care what my income is, that was before we had four children. Now I care what my income is also, but the benefits of my profession are just, oh they help relieve the financial burden immensely, that an independent person would have trouble having the same type of insurance that we have thanks to the school.

KEB: You work for it.

: 375

MB: Oh I certainly do work for it. The last two years more than ever. Oh my, that's a whole other tape! The changing students in American Schools. But, umm, I grew up thinking, oh I'll teach school for a couple of years, and then I'll be a housewife. And I was even kind of guarantee, or told, "Oh yeah, that will happen" from the farm family when I first entered the family. But the price support was cut, and so the price of milk cut drastically, and I worked because I have to financially, for the benefits, and because we can live more comfortably. I guess that's it. and I also like to teach, I do. It took me until our second child was born, so within the last ten years, I've really realized, that I really do enjoy teaching, and twice I've stayed home for child care and have been very ready to get back, for my own self-esteem. As

: 400 well as just the need to to want teach those rugrats a thing or two. Anyways I guess that it.

KR: OK, anything else you want to add? Any words of wisdom?

KEB: Don't have any, not one

MB: We're drained

KEB: If I was wise, I wouldn't be farming

MB: Not true, not true at all.

KR: OK. Well it sounds great, I've found out some wonderful information tonight. Thank you both for your time.

--end of tape--